

Message Text

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11

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 IO-03 /040 W

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P 161022Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9769

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0402

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: RABIN VISIT: ISRAELI CONCERN ABOUT LEBANESE SITUATION

1. AS RABIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON NEARS, SITUATION IN LEBANON CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE WITH ATTENDANT POSSIBILITY OF MILITARY INTERVENTION BY OUTSIDE FORCES, INCLUDING ISRAELI.

2. DURING PAST WEEK PRIMIN HIMSELF HAS TWICE CONVEYED CAREFULLY-WORDED WARNINGS OF POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS TO FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON. IN JAN. 9 BBC INTERVIEW RABIN SAID THAT "ANY CHANGE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE LEBANON CARRIES WITH IT A REAL DANGER FOR OUR SECURITY" AND ADDED THAT "ISRAEL WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO TOLERATE" INTERVENTION OF FOREIGN FORCES. HE STOPPED SHOTTRT HOWEVER OF AGREEING WITH OBSERVATION OF INTERVIEWER THAT SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON WOULD TRIGGER HOSTILITIES BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL. AGAIN ON JAN. 11, IN INTERVIEW ON GERMAN TELEVISION, RABIN REITERATED THAT ISRAEL "WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TOLERATE" FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON.

3. MOST ISRAELI OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, PRIVATELY APPRECIATE THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND
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THE CONSTRAINTS ON POSSIBLE SYRIA MILITARY ADVENTURES.

THEY UNDERSTAND, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SYRIA INTERVENTION IN ANY STRENGTH COULD ONLY BE AT EXPENSE OF SYRIAN CAPABILITY ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. RABIN, WHILE FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO BE ALERT TO SYRIAN INTERVENTION AND TO CONVEY THOSE SIGNALS TO DAMASCUS, PROBABLY DOES NOT EXPECT OVERT MILITARY INTERVENTION, AT LEAST AT PRESENT.

4. CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF SITUATION ON GROUND IN LEBANON, HOWEVER, AND SEEMING INABILITY OF SYRIAN AND OTHER MEDIATION EFFORTS TO HALT THE FIGHTING ENHANCES BOTH ISRAELI UNEASINESS AND SUSPICION OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS. ISRAELIS ARE CONCERNED LEST MOSLEM LEFTISTS IN LEBANON SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THEIR AUTHORITY AT EXPENSE OF CHRISTIANS WITH POSSIBLE RESULT THAT LEBANON WILL EVOLVE INTO CONFRONTATION STATE EVEN WITHOUT OVERT SYRIAN ENCOURAGEMENT.

5. RABIN WILL SPELL OUT CLEARLY HIS CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPING LEBANESE SITUATION; WE SHOULD BE EQUALLY CLEAR IN REITERATING OUR OWN CONCERN ABOUT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION AND STRESS THAT OUR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES ADVANCE CONSULTATION ON POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION.

6. (THIS MESSAGE APPROVED BY AMBASSADOR PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE.)
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, CIVIL DISORDERS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TELAV00402
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760016-1188
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760148/aaaabqqa.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RABIN VISIT: ISRAELI CONCERN ABOUT LEBANESE SITUATION
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, LE, SY, IS, US, (RABIN, YITSHAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006